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THOUGHTS

ON

ELOCUTION.

Illud tamen in primis testandum est, NIHIL praecepta atque artes valere, nisi adjuvante natura.

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In Proem.

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THOUGHTS

ON

ELOCUTION.

WHILE some are negotiating for peace, and others making preparations for war; at a time when our taxes are daily increasing, and the opinions of men on political subjects are strangely divided; Rufus and Adolphus live on much in their usual style: they seldom talk of public affairs, or complain of the present times, but often meet at the house of Quartus, to converse on such subjects as make them forget the contentions of the age, and incurious to learn the news of the day.

 Lately,

Lately, the art of Elocution happened to be the topic of their conversation. I was present; and being pleased with their sentiments, resolved to set down what I could recollect of their discourse; which is here published to gratify those who are interested in that subject.

What had passed between them before I entered the room, I cannot narrate: but soon after I was seated, and common civilities were exchanged, There are, said Rufus, but few, I believe, who do not wish to improve their elocution; and yet, Adolphus, whatever may be the cause, the art of speaking well, is not widely extended in this country.

I fear, said Adolphus, your observation is just. But, Rufus, you are so well acquainted with the orators of Greece and Rome, and so partial to their productions, that unless our best speakers were equal to them, what you hear at home would not command your applause.

Why, said Rufus, comparatively speaking, our orators do not seem to equal the ancients: yet we have some great men amongst us; and of late, not only much has been said of the low

and

and imperfect state of elocution in Great Britain, but many have been the attempts of ingenious men to give us better notions of correct pronunciation. To these ingenious gentlemen, said Rufus, I own myself indebted; and wish, sometime or other, to pay the interest of that debt to posterity, which at present, is not in my power. But, as we have fallen on this subject, let us consider, if you please, what is essential to sound elocution, and by what means our own may be improved.

I think, replied Adolphus, it is generally agreed, that without the gift of utterance, (which all have not, and none are able to command,) it is impossible to excel in the art of speaking.—Moses was as learned as Aaron; but Moses had not Aaron's mouth.

Certainly, said Rufus, to conceive, and execute, are very different things; for where the executive power is wanting, a man, otherwise of great abilities, may labor all his life to be eloquent in vain. I know that considerable defects may be overcome by practice and perseverance, as in the case of Demosthenes; but, after all, there are defects and obstructions,

in the pronunciation of some men, which no degree of art, or of labor, can possibly remove.

When that is really the case, said Adolphus, were such persons determined to make the best use of their own abilities, without the least degree of affectation, they would be regarded by the judicious, and obtain from them, that kind of notice which forward and affected speakers are unable to procure.

Yes, said Rufus, they would: and I imagine, that but few of our natural infirmities, are altogether unmanageable. I know not, whether most of them might not be so treated as to make them less displeasing to our friends. For instance, a man who stutters, might learn to stutter without fatigue; and he that lisps, might learn to lisp with ease.

It may be so, said Adolphus: but more, I fear, is essential to graceful elocution, than is commonly supposed. For, besides those natural endowments that cannot be dispensed with, a good acquaintance with sound logic, and with the leading principles of grammar, is, I believe, of so much importance, that he who is deficient in those

those things, will not excel in the art of speaking: nor will he be able to please his hearers for any length of time, unless they happen to be as illiterate as himself.—But one thing, Rufus, has excited my surprise: for I have often seen these, and other qualifications united, both at the bar, and in the pulpit, without being charmed, or even pleased with the speaker. Had this been the effect of indifference towards his subject, or of a low opinion of his audience, it would not have surprised me; but when men of undoubted ability, wish to excel in their own profession, and labor to be approved; when they evidently desire to instruct, please and affect their hearers, and own, they are grieved when they cannot command their attention; How am I, Rufus, to account for their disappointment?

It may, replied Rufus, proceed from causes I have not discovered: but I am sure, that men of ability sometimes are verbose, and tedious in their harangues. Their expressions are neither comprehensive, nor concise: hence the ear is fatigued, and the mind but slowly informed. They remind me of a tree of considerable value, surrounded with underwood, and

and so clogged with superfluous branches, that he must be a good judge indeed of timber, that would value it at its real worth. But, I have frequently thought, (supposing these impropriеties not to exist) that if such gentlemen were well acquainted with one thing I am going to mention, they would soon speak with some confidence of being heard with due respect. What I have now in view, permit me, Adolphus, to call mental speech: but as you may not immediately apprehend what I mean by that phrase, allow me to explain.

Every skilful reader, continued Rufus, knows, that by a slight perusal of the verse, the paragraph, or the page he is going to read, how easy it is for him to run over every syllable in his own mind, before he pronounces to his friends, what he has thus rapidly read to himself: and, in the very act of reading to them, he always takes care to have in his own perception, a few words in advance. Now, if this may be done when we read the works of other men, something like it may, and should be done, when we deliver our own sentiments, if we intend to pronounce them in a pleasing manner.

I think,

I think, said Adolphus, I perceive your meaning; and if I do, it meets with my approbation. Whether, Rufus, I ever had this notion before, I cannot recollect: but, I will endeavour to retain it, and try what can be made of this mode of utterance, when it is reduced to practice.

How you may succeed, said Rufus, you will one day inform me: but you may be assured, that the secret operations of our minds are wonderful; and were public speakers more aware of this than some of them are, and knew how much they might avail themselves of those operations in speaking, unobserved by their hearers, they would lay aside their ill-directed efforts to gain attention, and adopt a more affecting mode of delivery.

But, said Adolphus, would you have these secret energies exerted in public only, or also in private?—In both, replied Rufus: I will, however, first say, what may be done in private.

Suppose, continued Rufus, some man of ability knew, that he was soon expected to speak, on an interesting subject, before a select, or mixed

mixed assembly; he would, I apprehend, consider, how he might best acquit himself on such an occasion. Suppose, Adolphus, that being alone for that purpose, he imagines the hour arrived, the place at hand, and the company present. Suppose, that under the influence of these imaginations, he ruminates at large on what he intends to say. Suppose he does more than this; that, having put his best thoughts in a proper train, he seems to rise up gracefully before his audience, and without uttering a word, or once moving, either his lips, or his tongue, he goes through his intended speech, with every charm of diction he is able to express. Suppose, for instance, that, in the energies of his own mind, he is loud and low, grave and pleasant, rapid and gentle; calm, earnest, doubtful and confident, just as he thinks he should be when actually engaged, avoiding every vicious extreme; let all this, be supposed, and I contend, that such an exercise, would be of considerable advantage to such a student.

Undoubtedly it would, said Adolphus: and I presume, that our best speakers, have often availed themselves of these private preparations.

They

They who never did, are ill qualified, in my opinion, to appear in public.

Why, said Rufus, it is natural to draw that conclusion: yet there are exceptions, that should not be forgotten. For, it sometimes happens, that public speakers have, without labor, that to say, which none of their adversaries are able to resist: and, indeed, the power of instantly replying to a plausible, premeditated speech, with discretion, is always considered as a proof of transcendent ability in the speaker. Besides, Adolphus, it does not certainly follow, that they who are versed in these private exercises, are sufficiently prepared to speak in public: for, though they are useful, he that relies too much upon them, will often be disappointed when he stands most in need of their assistance.

Some, said Adolphus, aware of that danger, make use of written notes.—Yes, replied Rufus, written notes are very common in this country: but let it be remembered, he that reads does not speak, as a man of sense is disposed to speak; and he that has his eye constantly on a book, treats his audience with disrespect. Those gentlemen,

tlemen, continued Rufus, who think it necessary to secure the outlines of their discourses, should confine their notes within a very narrow compass, and take care to make them legible and plain. They should not contain a single sentence which they mean to repeat, but consist only of a few select words, so arranged as to exhibit in miniature, the leading articles of their speech, in such a manner as may both assist and employ their judgment, without fatiguing their retentive powers: for they who depend on memory more than on judgment, always give their discourses a mechanical appearance; which every good speaker is careful to avoid.—Hints, mere hints, Adolphus, are quite sufficient; the shorter the better; and these, an able speaker, will readily produce, diversify and unfold, as his subject, his audience, and the circumstances of time, and of place may require.

Here, my attention was called off from the conversation of my friends for a very few minutes; but, on my return into the room, I had reason to conclude, that very little had been advanced in my absence. I left Adolphus disposed to question, whether what Rufus had said of an able speaker, could be done so readily as he had suggested.

Rufus,

Rufus, who saw he was disposed to demur, had, it seems, endeavoured to answer his objections; and just as I returned he said, If you ask me, how this can be done? I answer, that a well informed speaker will do this with ease, by drawing freely from the stores of his own mind, what he has there long since laid up for occasional use; and by the assistance of that style which, for years, he has been careful to form, and improve.

To be sure, said Adolphus, a man who is rich in intellectual stores, and who has a good style perfectly at command, may go boldly on and prosper.—And can you suppose, said Rufus, that any speaker will rise into repute with good judges, on a meaner foundation? No, said he, I am persuaded, that in their presence, he who is not tolerably acquainted with many subjects, is not fit to speak on one. Let us, therefore, take it for granted, that the well laid up stores of a vigorous mind, and the manly style and address of the speaker, are of such importance, in many situations, that where they are wanting, whatever may be his learning, fortune, or rank, he runs a great hazard of being heard with evident signs of impatience, if not of disgust. But, continued

Rufus, our best speakers, it seems, have laid aside their notes; except they are obliged to mention certain minute affairs, which happen to be closely connected with things of considerable importance: otherwise, I am told, they leave their written notes at home, and go unincumbered to their most serious engagements.

Were some young preachers, replied Adolphus, to hear what you have now mentioned, they would be displeased.—Possibly they might, said Rufus, and some also, that are advanced in years: but there are others, I believe, that would not be offended. Remember, you yourself have said, that much more is essential to graceful elocution than is commonly supposed. You were right: for, he that speaks well, must not only have a correct and comprehensive view of his subject, but acquire a very high degree of self-possession: nor do I know of any thing more likely to produce it, than that kind of Mental Speech, which I have recommended to your notice.

You now remind me, said Adolphus, that though you have taught me how to manage

that

that kind of speech in private, the more difficult task of being master of it in public, I am yet to learn. Indulge me therefore with your opinion.

Suppose then, said Rufus, that a senator, a counsellor, or a preacher, prepared as I have stated before, were going to deliver his sentiments on some particular subject, the first five words he means to pronounce, he should, if I may so express it, utter within himself; just as he intends the next moment, to pronounce them openly to his audience. I do not mean, however, that he should do this, by any motion of his tongue, but only in the clear and strong perception of his own mind; the movements of which are rapid, beyond the most voluble articulation. Now, if he wisely direct these rapid movements, he will pronounce those five words firmly, with ease and vivacity; and will instantly perceive, how the next five words, or a smaller number, should follow; and proceeding thus, (making each enunciation subservient to the sense,) he will previously discern, in what manner every word should be placed and pronounced, so as best to illustrate, correct, or confirm the foregoing part of every sentence. If this be admit-

ted, as the longest speech contains but a certain number of words, it is only adding five words to five, or a smaller number to a smaller number, in the manner I have mentioned, and the whole speech, if it be judicious, will soon be delivered with that propriety, that will induce him who makes the trial to continue this practice.

Adolphus owned he was pleased with the explanation; and said, I have often observed, Rufus, that the dividing of a large whole into so many distinct parts, (as the terrestrial globe into the four common divisions,) has made the sum of its contents more obvious to my understanding: and, continued he, I have also remarked, that when we ascend a hill which is high and steep, to conceive, that so many single steps will bring us up to its summit, gives us additional courage to perform the laborious task; and if, in the very act of ascending, we are able to proceed in a kind of measured movement, pausing and pressing forward, as our path will admit; that, likewise, amuses the mind, and agreeably lessens our fatigue. Are you of the same opinion?

Your

Your remarks, said Rufus, are not common, but they are just: and a good speaker, or I am much deceived, will go through his longest speech, pausing and pressing at proper intervals, and in proper places; yet holding on, with all that variety of diction, which his subject and situation demand.

What you would call a good speaker, said Adolphus, may do this: but, I am afraid it will be more than I can manage.—Give not way, replied Rufus, to unnecessary fears. Continual practice, with becoming diffidence of yourself, and the reasonable hope of success, will lead you to perform more than you can previously imagine.

You are very obliging, said Adolphus, at once to inform and animate my mind: and if you have leisure, I still wish to receive from you additional thoughts on elocution.

At present, said Rufus, I have not leisure to be much more minute: and to say truth, if I had, in your case, it seems unnecessary. Though I recollect some things on that subject, which perhaps I may mention at a convenient opportu-

nity; yet, Adolphus, I seldom avail myself of their assistance; never, but as those things happen to rise in my mind unsought for, and have in that moment the sanction of my own judgment. You will best of all learn, in the course of your reading, and observation, as much of the *minutiæ* of the art of elocution as is worth your notice. But remember, Adolphus, that in this art, much more depends on good taste, (which is but another word for a correct, and almost intuitive judgment) than on a multiplicity of rules. For, most rules, if too closely followed, bring with them some inconvenience: and indeed, there are but few rules in rhetoric, that I have met with, which should not be occasionally transgressed.---Eloquence loves to be at ease; and sometimes to "snatch a grace beyond the reach of art;" but, whatever is forced, or formal, will never satisfy a sensible audience.

I admit, said Adolphus, that if we are oppressed with rules, when we attempt to speak, they will have a bad effect. Yet, I apprehend, that the best rules should often be consulted in private, and be more frequently regarded in conversation than they usually are. The neglect

lect of this will, I believe, account for many disagreeable things in some of our public speakers.

Yes, said Rufus, it will: but you have now glanced at an evil, difficult to heal. For some public speakers, to my knowledge, are so careless and crude, in conversation, that when they are inclined to be more decent and correct, their vicious habits demand indulgence; and ere they are aware, not only improper tones, and motions, are noticed by their hearers, but low, coarse, and vulgar words, fall from their lips, and strangely disgrace their best orations.

And what, said Adolphus, would you propose as a remedy for this disease?—I know of no remedy, replied Rufus, but that which goes to the root of the evil: and, as this evil proceeds from daily inadvertence, and indiscretion, such idle habits must be carefully noticed, and day by day subdued. For, eloquence, like holiness, must be general, in order to be strong. He therefore, that is loose and sordid in his companionable qualities, will find it extremely difficult to be correct and chaste in his public capacity. Yet, said Rufus, I still contend, that rules, if too closely

closely followed, bring with them their own inconvenience: and I am sure, that a vexatious scrupulosity in the choice, and in the arrangement of our words, is as injurious to sound speech, as that sort of negligence which I have so freely censured.—"Nothing too much," was the celebrated saying of an antient philosopher; and, on the subject before us, that aphorism merits your regard; since, if you suffer petty rules to have dominion over you, (and many written rules on the art of speaking are no better,) you will never speak like a man of business, but as a man of words; and then, you will always lose more than you gain, by such trifling, and by such inglorious bondage.

I will venture to say, continued Rufus, that there are a thousand graces in speech, for which no rhetoricians, that I have consulted, have yet invented any settled rule; nor, so far as I have observed, have they hitherto found for them, apt and significant names. I am not surprised at this: for one man, in his expressions, pauses, tones, looks, and gestures, certainly may do that, which had he done it in earlier life, and in very different circumstances, or even before a very different set of people, would have been

absurd,

absurd. Rules, said Rufus, if good ones, are the result of sagacious observations on facts, and on the nature of things: but these are so varied, and the possible connexion of ideas, and combination of words, so numerous, that they exceed, and ever will exceed, all that the most learned amongst us are able to discover. Nothing, added Rufus, can be right in eloquence, which is not relatively right, but what that is, in every respect, and on all occasions, if we have not a better guide to direct us than written rules, we shall never understand.

I think, said Adolphus, some women speak admirably well, without being conscious of it: and, I own, that very circumstance, always increases my admiration.

Well it may, replied Rufus; for that circumstance, is one of the finest ornaments connected with human speech.---To see a man, Adolphus, pushed on by some sentiments he is unable to manage; to perceive, that he fancies he is going to utter something very witty, important, or profound, and that he labors to bring forth his notions in an arch, formal, or ceremonious manner, is a very painful discovery; but to hear a

sensible

sensible man deliver his best sentiments, on a serious subject, in an easy, vigorous, and dispassionate manner, is highly pleasing.

As to the ladies, continued Rufus, some of them, on subjects suited to their abilities, are fine speakers indeed: and he that was never charmed with their elocution, has not much enriched his own. But there are women who have great excellence, and great defects in their conversation; which shews, that if the best natural gifts are not supported by sound principles, she who captivated our attention this minute, may, in the next, excite our pity, and fill us with surprise. It seems, therefore, that those speakers who trust entirely to their own taste, and those who are laden with precept upon precept, are equally liable to err: and their errors, though not of the same kind, should be avoided.

But, said Adolphus, would it not be wrong in me, to spend much time in arranging the number, and adjusting the order of my words?

Yes, said Rufus, it would: but what is gradually, and thoroughly wrought into habit, which

which is what I have recommended, is always ready for use. I also admit, that what best deserves to be called the grace of speech, is, on most occasions sufficient, without the aid of art. To be frank, ingenuous, and sincere, with competent knowledge of our subject, and with due respect for those we are disposed to address, will, in most cases, secure attention, and command esteem. No degree of art can supply the want of these engaging qualities, nor please the judicious, if they are absent. Yet, if we take the lead in any civil, or serious business, or are disposed to tell a story, or a tale, it then becomes us, not only to find out acceptable words, but to place them in that order, and to express them in that manner, which is most likely to be approved.

I believe, said Adolphus, that the art and grace of speaking, may be united: but, we each of us allow, that this pleasing junction is not easily formed, nor, when formed, easily preserved.---Now, Rufus, as you know my situation, say, if you please, how I may obtain that mode of utterance which will best become me in the management of my approaching duties.

I need

I need not, replied Rufus, warn you against the slightest appearance of affectation; nor, I hope, against your being the servile imitator of any favorite in your own profession. We are all of us, by nature, in some things originals; why therefore, should we desire to be apes?---Be yourself; and hope that others may live to learn of you, as well as you of them.---For the rest, you have had some of my best thoughts on elocution already. I will however add, that if you wish to excel in your future engagements, you should often consider, that though words upon most occasions, may declare our thoughts, they are by no means sufficient to manifest our emotions. If you would make those conspicuous, consider by what tones, looks and gestures, that may be effected; and believe me, whether you speak, or read, if you seem not touched with the sentiments you deliver, or appear improperly affected, your audience will either slumber, or complain.

I believe, said Adolphus, they will; but I am concerned for them who are obliged, or inclined, to speak in public.---It would be well, replied Rufus, if under the present rage for speaking in public, on all sorts of subjects, by almost

all

all sorts of persons, many of those enterprising gentlemen felt what you feel at the thought of being so engaged; and if some who encourage them, were to think more of the probable consequences of such misconduct. But you, who are called to be a teacher, and well prepared for that office, must not be cast down at your approaching duties; nor imagine, that sober thoughts of your own incompetence, will be a bar to your future improvement. I know a man, who has long occupied a station like your own, that has often told me, he could never satisfy himself in the delivery of any one of his sermons; and yet, said he, that very circumstance, has turned out more to my advantage than I am able to express.

How, said Adolphus, did he explain that paradox?—Why, replied Rufus, he used to say, That a man who is soon pleased with himself, seldom endeavours to excel in any situation; and that he who is dissatisfied with his best efforts, naturally studies to make those improvements which otherwise he would not struggle to possess. Such was his explanation; and, continued Rufus, in my opinion, he who is soon pleased with his own discourses will soon weary

his hearers; and he that seems to be so, will soon offend them.

I admit, said Adolphus, that most people are fond of their own discoveries; and I suppose, that those beauties which hearers cannot of themselves discover, they cannot honestly commend. But if so, the tempers, and the capacity of the people to whom we speak, should be carefully considered.

They should, said Rufus; but after all, you must resolve to state your own sentiments to them, and not think of being governed by their notions; otherwise, you are not a teacher, but, a dupe; detained by mean motives, to please you know not whom, instead of standing up to edify your audience. Besides, should your congregation be large, you must not expect it will be always united in sentiment; and should it be judicious, unless your hearers perceive that your probity is equal to your understanding, you will not be able to command and secure their approbation. I wish you may always welcome conviction from every quarter; but make, I beseech you, no submission to any man at the expence of truth, and to the hurt of your conscience.

Nothing

Nothing on earth can countervail that damage. —As to your style, that is a different affair. Let it descend to the lowest capacity, without being coarse, or crude: let it occasionally rise with that glow of expression which the nature of some things may demand, and be varied, just as the nature of other things may require.

Since, Adolphus, you have put me on saying more than I intended, I advise you to consider with some degree of care, the form and force of poetical feet; since, in proportion as you are skilled in numerous composition, you will be able to fabricate your own style, and to give it the best direction.

But what! said Adolphus, would you seriously have me cultivate an acquaintance with all the ill-looking, and harsh-sounding names of poetical feet?

I fancy, replied Rufus, you are pretty well acquainted with the names of them already. But as Spondean feet, in which you know, each of the two syllables is long, and the Iambic, where you recollect, the first syllable is short, and the second long; as these feet mix best, and most

abound in our well regulated prose, I would have you pay some attention to them, and observe, where they should be placed, and how they should be pronounced. Only take care when thus employed, that you do not give your prose too much of the poetical gait; a fault not easily avoided by them who are fond of *rhythm*, and of numerous composition.

I will endeavour, said Adolphus, to re-consider this curious subject; and I hope, whatever I may forget of your remarks this evening, I shall not forget what you have said of Mental Speech.

If, said Rufus, what I have thrown out on that subject, should be re-considered, you will find it may be applied to every thing we are disposed to say in every situation. Speak before you speak, is the rule I have recommended: and this rule I have so explained, that you cannot mistake my meaning.

There is no danger of that, said Adolphus, and I am too much pleased with your rule to disregard it: for I think this mode of utterance would have a good effect on our morals, as well

as

as on our elocution; since it would often lead us to correct in a moral sense, what we are going to say both at home and abroad. Were your advice regarded in common life, servants would not be so loquacious, nor masters so imperious, as many of them are; and I apprehend, that if it were regarded in our devotions, it would there also be of great service.—I remember, Rufus, that when I was a boy, Think before you speak, appeared to be a sober maxim; but your aphorism seems to be of greater value.

Perhaps, said Rufus, it may; because it takes nothing from that antient saying, but adds somewhat to its energy. Yet, do not suffer yourself to be carried away at once with a new sentiment: examine it thoroughly, and then reject, or receive it with sobriety. Should you, on reflection, think what I have said is worth your notice, remember, that the rule you have so much commended, should be used as though you used it not. In your best moments, you may happily forget it; and if things make way for words, and you are properly affected with them, you often will forget it; but, when you most need its assistance, recollect, that art seldom pleases unless it be concealed. The opposite extreme, how-

ever, must be constantly avoided; for though a public speaker should, in the highest degree, be fluent in his words, warm in his expressions, and flattering in his address, he will at last find, that nothing can please long, which is not founded on principle, and under the dominion of common sense.

Here, the conversation closed, excepting only a few words that were said of common sense: which Rufus allowed was strangely misrepresented by some authors, and owned, that in his opinion, what was properly so called, was a very uncommon thing. The rest, I have related as correctly as I could, omitting nothing more than my slender part in the preceding discourse, which is a loss the reader has no reason to regret.

FINIS.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

IT is said, that Adolphus has lately given himself wholly to the ministry, in a reputable situation, and that Rufus has recommended to his notice a book on Christian Eloquence in Theory and Practice. This book was published at Lyons, in France, by M. Gisbert, in the year 1715, and translated by M. D'Oyley, 1718.—Had we a judicious abridgement of this celebrated performance, it would be a valuable present to public speakers of every description; especially to those who are designed for the pulpit. The last chapter of this much admired book, wherein every thing required of the christian orator, is founded solely on the end of his ministry, may be taken as a fair sample of the whole; and it is here subjoined to gratify those who have not seen, or who do not read the original work.

"I shall

"I SHALL finish all my reflections by this great rule: We should judge of the good, or bad taste of that eloquence which is peculiar to the pulpit, with regard to the end which is proper and essential to it. It is an argument of your having a good taste, if in the composition of your discourses you make use of such means as may contribute to the attainment of that end; and if you do not make use of them, your taste is bad. All that we have said in this work, all that we require of the christain orator, is founded solely on the end of his ministry.

Why would we have him join the conviction of the heart, with the persuasion of the mind, and not be satisfied with instructing his hearers, without affecting them? Because the motion of the heart inclines the will much more strongly towards its object, than the light of the mind.

Why do we desire that he should have a sense of all that he says, and never speak without it? Because if he has not himself a sense of what he says, he will never induce his hearers to have any; and if they have it not, they will neither be touched, nor persuaded.

Why

Why would we have an air of liberty run through all his discourses, and such an easy freedom as is no way prejudicial to the accuracy and exactness of them? Because every thing that looks forced and strained is disagreeable and tiresome; and whatever offends and fatigues, cannot persuade.

Why would we have him diffuse a pleasing mixture of variety in his discourses? Because variety keeps up attention, and prevents languor: and because inattention and disgust are the great enemies of persuasion. For how should any hearer be persuaded, who is not attentive, or who is offended?

What do we desire farther of the christian orator? We desire that there may be something new and noble, marvellous and sublime in his discourses. Why? Because all this strikes the hearer, and carries him forcibly, and as it were, against his inclination, to that point of conviction we designed to conduct him.

We desire that with the great and sublime, a place may always be reserved for an amiable simplicity: because, besides the natural agreeableness

ableness of such simplicity, it removes all suspicion and distrust from the hearer's mind of one's having the least thought of imposing on him, and taking him by surprise, and sets a mark of candor and integrity on every thing the orator says, and makes it credible; without which, we can never persuade. For how shall we persuade a man who is suspicious, and who is always on his guard against conviction?

We would have him be popular. Why? Because without popularity, it is impossible for him to proportion what he says to the common sentiments and ideas of mankind; and without this proportion, he may torment himself to no purpose; nothing is insinuated into the mind, nothing has the power of persuasion.

We would have him speak always in a practical manner, that is to say, in a manner which hath of itself a tendency to action: because it is evident, this is the only way of speaking, that is capable of persuading effectually, since it is the only one which continually and directly inclines the hearer to act.

In fine, we would have his action to be always brisk and lively; but withal tranquil; we would have it diversified, but equal: an air of modesty should preside over his whole person, in his voice, and in his expressions. Let him forget nothing that may be of service to engage the friendship and confidence of his hearers: let him have an inviolable respect for the public, to whom he speaks, for his character, to which he should do honour, for the Word of God, of which he is the minister, and for the truth, of which he is the organ, or the publisher to the world. But why do we require all this of the christain orator? Because without all this, he never will be able to persuade and convert men.

You will now easily discover what is wanting in the generality of preachers. They want emotion; they endeavour to instruct much more than to persuade. They want sentiment and unction; they speak by idea only; it is the mind that preaches and not the heart. They want liberty; there is too much constraint in every thing they deliver; they are too fond of a starched, and stiff manner of expressing themselves. They want variety; a certain uniformity that produces disgust, follows them constantly. They want popularity;

pularity; they do not adapt themselves sufficiently to the capacity of the multitude. They want, lastly, the practical part in their discourses; they speak too speculatively.

What therefore must you do?—In all your discourses, join emotion with instruction; politeness with sentiment and unction; accuracy with liberty; variety with an exact proportion; strength with sweetness; popularity with the great and sublime; the moral and practical part with all you have to say, and you will attain a good, if you do not attain a perfect taste of christian eloquence."

Much as I may admire this portrait of a christian preacher, I cannot avoid thinking, that M. Gisbert had too high an opinion of moral suasion, and too little regard for that energy without which, no sinner is converted to Jesus Christ. When I sit at his feet, I blush at the discovery of my own imperfections; but, after all, I would rather learn from Saint Paul, than from him, how to preach of that grace which bringeth salvation.

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THE END.